

# Safety Policy

Appalachian Highlands Historical Fencing

## PURPOSE

The Safety Policy of Appalachian Highlands Historical Fencing (AHHF) is for the protection of the participants, spectators, and for the preservation of our insurance policy.

The Safety Policy is not designed to provide specifics for every conceivable situation. The Policy is a base-guideline for official AHHF activities.

Members who violate the Safety Policy will face disciplinary action, up to expulsion from AHHF. AHHF will not be held liable for any injury that may occur as a result of violating the Policy.

AHHF reserves the right to update the Safety Policy at any time, with or without notice. The current edition of the Policy supersedes all previous Policies, effective from the time of upload until the next revision is published.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of Appalachian Highlands Historical Fencing are responsible for reading and understanding the Safety Policy prior to participation in any activity or event. Participation in an activity or event will constitute agreement with and acceptance of the Policy.

AHHF requires at least one active member to interpret the Safety Policy at any event or activity, typically the event organizer unless otherwise delegated. It is this individual's responsibility to ensure an activity meets the Policy, to mandate what gear falls within the Policy, and to inspect equipment for compliance with the Policy.

Failure to abide by this individual's judgement will constitute a violation of the Safety Policy.

## GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- Individual participation in an official activity or the use of equipment or trainers owned by Appalachian Highlands Historical Fencing requires that individual to first sign and file an official waiver.
- Individuals participating in an activity must be conscientious of bystanders' safety. Participants must create a reasonable amount of space between themselves and any spectators, such that should the participants briefly leave their designated space, they do not put bystanders at risk.
- AHHF keeps a first-aid kit on hand at all official activities. Individuals must make themselves aware of its location.
- Participants, spectators, and event organizers must agree upon a verbal signal to halt any action for safety reasons (e.g. "Hold!", "Safety!", or "Halt!"). This applies to all activities.

# PRACTICE

- Practice can include drills, all forms of sparring, and much more. The type of activity will determine the safety requirements.
- Demonstrations, introductory instruction, and marketing are not considered practice, but should only be performed by experienced practitioners with reasonable expectations of safety.
- Choreographed sparring is not considered practice and is not bound by its equipment guidelines.
- Activity types and their respective safety requirements are as follows:
  - Masks are required for any activities that involve thrusts.
  - Drilling: Weapon trainers must meet the guidelines set forth for tournaments. If thrusting, then masks are required. No other requirements.
  - Slow Play: Same as for drilling.
  - Free Play: Masks are required. Padded gloves of any type (e.g. Oil-rig gloves, rapier gloves, etc.) are required.
  - Earnest/Competitive Sparring: Tournament guidelines for equipment are recommended, but not necessarily required.
    - Example: If participants are earnestly sparring and disallow shin strikes, then shin protection is recommended, but not required.
  - It is recommended that participants wear additional equipment for slow or free play, but it is not required.
- For unlisted activities, event organizers will mandate the equipment they think is sufficient for the activity. Appalachian Highlands Historical Fencing may not be held liable if participants ignore this mandate and an injury occurs.
- Appalachian Highlands Historical Fencing may not be held liable for injuries that occur when not wearing equipment appropriate for the given activity.

## Modern Fencing Blade Exception

For the purposes of both practice and tournaments, hard joint-protection, occipital protection, shin protection, and forearm protection are not required for modern fencing blades. This includes foil, epee, and modern saber blades. The blades do not need to be FIE-compliant, but at minimum should meet the USAF standards for blades.

## CUTTING ACTIVITIES

These requirements apply to both tournament and practice activities with sharps.

Appalachian Highlands Historical Fencing permits the use of sharp weapons for the purpose of cutting non-living targets, solo-drills, solo-practice, or solo-competition.

- Participants must maintain extreme awareness of bystanders at all times.
- Cutting is a solo activity. Two or more people with sharp weapons must not be cutting in the same area at the same time.
- Only those individuals participating in cutting activities are permitted within the competition or practice area, and only so many as may compete or practice safely with sufficient space between participants. These areas will be clearly marked.

## TOURNAMENTS

Tournaments refer to intensive sparring whose purpose is adversarial competition, as opposed to drilling or practice. Other types of tournaments, such as cutting tournaments, have different rules in their own section.

Appalachian Highlands Historical Fencing will use the following guidelines for tournaments. Tournament organizers are free to alter the guidelines by providing more specifics where the Safety Policy is general, as well as increasing requirements. Tournament organizers will not reduce the requirements below those listed within the Policy.

The tournament organizer shall have the final say over whether or not the tournament rules, equipment, and weapon trainers comply with the Policy.

### Equipment

- Head: The entire head and front of the throat must be covered. Head protection must be sturdy enough to withstand impacts. There should be no gaps in coverage that would allow a thrust or strike to the face. Occipital protection is required and must be stiff enough to withstand a full strike from a steel trainer. No major gaps are allowed.
  - Masks with severe dents will be disallowed.
- Throat: A hardened covering must protect the throat. This covering must be sufficient to stop a full thrust to the front of the throat at minimum.
- Torso: Clothing must cover the body. There must be no gaps in combat-facing surfaces (i.e. Disallowed in the armpits or on the chest, but allowed on the back).
  - A tip catcher is strongly recommended, either in the throat protection or torso protection, but is not required.

- Groin: Male fencers must wear an internal or external cup. External cups must fit close to the body.
  - Groin protection is recommended for female fencers but is not required.
- Elbow & Knee: A hard elbow-covering must protect the joints. Stiff, closed-cell foam (e.g. foam inserts) may be allowed, but tournament organizers may disallow them if the item is compromised or insufficient.
  - Protection should also cover the sides of the joints; protection that only barely covers the center of the joint will be disallowed.
- Hands: A hard, sparring glove must protect the hands. Un-modified lacrosse gloves, padded gloves, or similar are only allowed with weapons that also protect the hand with either a complex hilt or a buckler.
  - This can be assessed on a hand-by-hand basis, i.e. it is acceptable for an individual to use a sparring glove with an arming sword and a padded glove with a buckler.
- Shins: Shins must be sufficiently covered. Shin guards that only cover a portion of the front of the shin (e.g. children's shin guards) are insufficient.
  - It is strongly recommended that shin guards wrap around the sides of the shin and include ankle protection (e.g. lacrosse or field hockey shin guards).
  - Shin protection is not required if the tournament disallows shins as a target.
- Skin: Skin must be significantly covered.
  - Example: A small gap between a sock and knickers is fine, but exposed calves are not.
  - Example: An untucked shirt that pulls up during a high guard is fine.
  - Single stick and dagger trainers do not require significant skin covering.
- Feet: Shoes or other foot coverings must be worn during tournaments.
- Weapon Trainer: The trainer must be free of splinters, burrs, or other sharp edges. Edges must be blunt or blunted, including the weapon furniture and the schilt. Sharp edges or points must be filed down. The tip must not come to a point.
  - Tips must have additional protection if they are 8.5mm or smaller in width.
  - Tips that are not spatulated or swelled and are below 10mm in width are recommended to be tipped, but not required.

## Weapon-Specific Requirements

All tournament equipment requirements apply, with the addition of:

- Synthetic, Wood, and Rattan Trainers
  - Applies to longswords, staves, spears, and single-handed trainers without a complex hilt.
  - Hands: Sturdy gloves or gauntlets must be used to protect the hands and wrists. Gloves must include protection on the sides and tips of the fingers sufficient to resist hard strikes from steel or synthetic weapons while holding the weapon.
    - “Homebrew” or modified gloves are acceptable if they meet the above requirements. Tournament organizers have full discretion to disallow any glove they deem unsafe.
    - Steel gauntlets require additional interior padding. A mechanic’s glove has minimal padding and would thus be insufficient.
  - Forearms: Forearm protection is recommended, but not required.
- Steel and Aluminum Trainers
  - Applies to longswords and single-handed trainers without a complex hilt.
  - Hands: Same as for synthetic, wood, and rattan trainers
  - Torso: Torso protection must be constructed with at least 350 N material and reasonably padded. Clothing for daily wear is unacceptable without additional protection.
- Single-Handed Trainers
  - Applies to single-handed trainers with a complex hilt, including single stick.
  - Hands: If the weapon itself provides sufficient hand protection, then only a standard rapier glove or equivalent is required. Otherwise, same as for synthetic, wood, and rattan trainers.
    - The off hand must be either kept clear of danger (e.g. tucked behind the back) or covered with a protective glove.
- Thrusting Trainers
  - Applies to rapier, dagger, and other weapon trainers where thrusts are the principal method of attack.
  - Hands: Same as for single-handed trainers.
  - Torso: Same as for steel and aluminum trainers.

## Modern Fencing Blade Exception

For the purposes of both practice and tournaments, hard joint-protection, occipital protection, shin protection, and forearm protection are not required for modern fencing blades. This includes foil, epee, and modern saber blades. The blades do not need to be FIE-compliant, but at minimum should meet the USAF standards for blades.

## Grappling

- Grappling an opponent's weapon is permitted.
- Standing takedowns and throws are permitted only when performed on a safe surface.
  - Safe surfaces include but are not limited to sprung floors, wrestling mats, wooden ball courts, carpeted floors, synthetic and organic turf, and fencing pistes.
  - Unsafe surfaces include but are not limited to cement, asphalt, and other hard surfaces.

## Wrestling

- Appalachian Highlands Historical Fencing approves of wrestling only when practiced without strikes.
- A mouthguard to protect the teeth is recommended, but not required.
- Cups are recommended, but not required.
- The wrestling surface must meet at least basic minimum safety requirements for other martial arts systems that involve standing takedowns. Wrestling on hard or unprotected surfaces is disallowed.
- Individuals must exercise extreme caution when performing joint-locks or any other situation in which harm can come to a participant.

## Harness

The Safety Policy for armored combat is designed for rigid spears, pole-axes, maces, etc. Appalachian Highlands Historical Fencing recommends individuals equip armor made of hardened steel, carbon steel, or stainless steel, as mild steels cannot take similar levels of impact without damage. AHHF does not require higher-quality steels, but armors from mild steels should be made thicker to provide equivalent protection.

Leather armor may be worn. This should, however, be of the "splinted" armor types where splints protect the forearms, thighs, and shins. Leather should be at least 8-ounce leather (1/8" thick) and hardened (e.g. via oil, paraffin, or wax treatments), or 12-ounce, un-hardened leather.

- Head: Helms must be at least 16 gauge for stainless or hardened steel or 14 gauge for cold- or hot-rolled steel. These thicknesses apply also to visors and faceplates. Helms must be padded or suspended.

- Open-faced helms are not permitted.
- Visors must lock or buckle closed to prevent opening during combat.
- Visor slits must be fitted with perf-plate or crossbars that prevent thrusts from entering the visor. Slits must be smaller than the trainers to prevent thrusts from entering the helm.
- Padding must be at least 0.5” thick and may be constructed from quilted cloth, foam, or other material that can reduce impact force.
- Throat: Gorgets may be worn as needed.
- Torso: Cuirasses must protect the shoulders (including the collarbone and shoulder blades), the spine (in its entirety, including tailbone), and chest (including the rib-cage, the breastbone, and the kidneys). The armor must be at least 20 gauge for stainless or hardened steel or 18 gauge for cold- or hot-rolled steel.
- Groin: An internal cup is required. An external cup may also be worn in conjunction with an internal cup.
- Arms: Solid or splinted armor for upper and lower arms are required. Solid cops for the elbows are required. The armor must be at least 20 gauge for stainless or hardened steel or 18 gauge for cold- or hot-rolled steel.
- Hands: Gauntlets of plated steel are required. Gauntlets must cover the entire wrist and protect all the fingers, including the fingertips and thumb. If the fingers do not “ground out” on the weapon’s haft, then additional padding is recommended.
- Legs: Solid or splinted armor for the thighs and shins are required. Solid cops for the knees are required. The armor must be at least 20 gauge for stainless or hardened steel or 18 gauge for cold- or hot-rolled steel.
- Feet: A sturdy covering of some sort is required.

## **INSUFFICIENTLY-REPAIRED EQUIPMENT**

At the time of inspection, equipment must be repaired to provide the same level of protection as an undamaged version of that equipment. Appalachian Highlands Historical Fencing may not be held liable for injuries that result from repairs made with tape, string, quick-stitch jobs, or other temporary repairs to equipment.

- Damage that is not material to the protection of the gear is not bound by this rule.
- Gear damaged during an event must be reviewed by the event organizer to determine if it can be temporarily repaired or if the gear should be disallowed going forward.

## **DISALLOWED ACTIVITIES**

Appalachian Highlands Historical Fencing forbids the following activities:

- Sparring or opposed drilling with sharps.
- Earnest sparring without proper head protection.
- Sparring without hand protection appropriate to the sparring speed.
- Mounted combat of any kind.
- Intoxication of any kind by active participants and working staff.

Individuals engaging in the above activities will face disciplinary action, up to expulsion from AHHF. AHHF may not be held liable for injuries resulting from the above activities.